

**Governor's Commission on Immigration  
MEETING MINUTES**

September 23, 2008

House Room D  
General Assembly Building  
Richmond, VA

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- CALL TO ORDER:** The September meeting of the Virginia Immigration Commission was called to order at 2:13 p.m.
- PRESIDING:** Senator Watkins
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dr. Rajul Malik, Mr. George Foresman, Reverend Gerry Creedon, Delegate Jackson H. Miller, Senator John C. Watkins, Dr. Venita Newby-Owens, Mr. Charles T. Griffith, Mayor Pranas A. Rimekis, Dr. Yasmine Cheema, Senator Richard L. Saslaw, Mr. Satya Akula, Mr. Eliot Norman, Ms. Carmen Alicia Bernal, Captain Eddie Reyes, Ms. Wanda Hamilton, Delegate C. Todd Gilbert, Delegate Robert G. Marshall
- MEMBERS ABSENT:** Delegate Roslyn C. Tyler, Delegate Dwight C. Jones, Senator George Barker
- STAFF PRESENT:** Secretary Marilyn Tavenner, Secretary of Health & Human Resources  
Heidi Dix, Assistant Deputy Secretary of Health & Human Resources  
Margaret Schultze, Virginia Department of Social Services Assistant Commissioner  
Sindy Benavides, Director of Gubernatorial Appointments & Latino Liaison  
Matt Gross, Virginia Department of Social Services Policy Analyst
- ELECTIONS:** Due to the authorization of the Commission via Executive Order, the Chair and co-chair of the Commission needed to be re-elected. Mr. Foresman nominated Senator Watkins to be the chair. Senator Saslaw seconded the nomination. The commission members voted 12-0 in favor. Mr. Foresman nominated Delegate Miller to be the co-chair. Senator Saslaw seconded the nomination. The commission members voted 12-0 in favor.
- PRESENTATIONS:** **Presenter #1: Michael Cassidy, Executive Director, The Commonwealth Institute**  
"Tax Contributions of Virginia's Undocumented Immigrant Population"  
*Please review presentation handout for presentation details.*

Presentation Discussion:

(Saslaw) Was that tax information state and federal? (Cassidy) Yes.  
(Akula) The \$27,400 is that a gross or net income? (Cassidy) That is the net income. (Norman) Do you know if Maryland or North Carolina have done similar studies? (Cassidy) To my knowledge they have not. I do know that Georgia, Iowa, Colorado, and Oregon have. (Foresman) That was very well done. In the context, if we looked at the immigrant population as a whole, have you come across the numbers of how much of Virginia's economy is dependant on immigrant labor? (Cassidy) We did not come across that data, but we can look at that and get back to the commission.  
(Akula) How many undocumented immigrants file for taxes? (Cassidy) We assume that 50% are paying into the system, but we do not think many are getting returns. We know that many get a taxpayer ID number to prove they are paying taxes, but they cannot get a refund. (Creedon) How do contributions compare to costs? (Cassidy) There are no studies comparing the costs to benefits. FAIR estimated nationwide \$400 million a year, but I'm not sure how they got those numbers. Other costs include services like emergency care and education. The comptroller of Texas studied the costs of immigrants to the state; we did not have access to that information in Virginia as a private non-profit group. (Watkins) I think that Mr. Foresman's question raises some interesting points. There are many immigrants who work and pay taxes legally. If you have a resource for this information, I think it would be helpful for what we are trying to accomplish. (Cassidy) We should be able to come up with some of those figures, certainly within a range like we did for this study, based on some assumptions such as average wages earned. (Foresman) Is there a way for us to look at the educational and health care data for this report, much like they did in Texas? (Tavennner) We will see what we can do. (Norman) Regarding the Georgia study; is it available, and did they look at legal and illegal immigrants? (Cassidy) I will send Matt a link to that study.

**Presenter #2: My Lan Tran, Asian Chamber of Commerce**

**"Asian Immigration: Economic Impacts on the U.S. Economy"**

*Please review presentation handout for presentation details*

Presentation Discussion:

(Saslaw) I would comment that the Asian population is 10% of Northern Virginia and 45% of the incoming call at the math and science high school. (Tran) In talking to small business owners and families, I see a notion to migrate to other places to do business because of the competition.

**Presentation #3: Clemet Carter, M.D., Hispanic Chamber of Commerce**

“Hispanic Immigration and Hispanic Business Development”  
*Please review presentation handout for presentation details.*

Presentation Discussion:

(Miller) What source do you have for us being the number one place for business in 2008? (Carter) I believe that is Forbes.com. (Miller) I think CNBC moved us to number 2. (Saslaw) I believe Forbes still has us at number 1. (Creedon) Is there a particular country that has been more successful than others? (Carter) Not based on the information that we have available. (Foresman) To reference back to our last speaker, we have some conflicting data. That indicates the Asian population has a higher education and income level. I think we need to validate this information. (Carter) My comparison was to the general Virginia population. If I remember from the previous presentation, which was among immigrant groups, so the numbers may both be accurate.

MINUTES: Mr. Foresman made a motion to approve the April minutes. Mayor Rimekis seconded the approval. The Commission voted and adopted the minutes.

WHITE PAPER: (Foresman) I have two questions. One, we have a large volume of data that we have collected. I realize that times are tight, what resources do we have to use this data so it is meaningful and can support a debate? Two, what is our timeline for establishing a report? (Watkins) I would hope that we can present a report in mid December to mid January. (Rimekis) Is January the termination of the Commission’s charter? (Watkins) We have a June 30<sup>th</sup> cut-off. (Akula) What is the process of selecting recommendations? (Watkins) I think if there are specific recommendations not in the white paper, we need those in writing to distribute to the commission. With regard to the white paper, I think if there is a consensus that something in there should come out. That as well should be done. (Foresman) I might suggest we ask the members over the course of the next 30 days to think about the presentations we have heard, and if there are issues that are not on here, that they present them to Matt, you, and the co-chair. This way we do not draw this out over an extended period of time. (Creedon) The thrust of the recommendations are to Virginia, are not we also mandated to address the federal delegation. (Watkins) If you look at the chart, we have columns for state and federal recommendations. (Creedon) One of the biggest concerns in Northern Virginia is the length of time to be naturalized. It happens faster in other states. I’d be interested to know why that is. (Watkins) We can ask that question of the Attorney General’s office. One of the issues that was brought up in one of the public hearings is VA should do more to find people that need to get registered and on the path to naturalization, and to supplement that effort, and I think that is in here. (Reyes) From

talking to people on the street, volume and backlog seems to be a huge issue. Typically, it happens faster for a person from Southern Virginia as opposed to Northern Virginia because of backlog. (Marshall) I would like an electronic version this document. (Watkins) We can provide that. (Creedon) I would like to add a word of support to the suggestion on the restrictions on Medicaid coverage. I thought it was compelling that we are one of 9 states that require 10 years instead of 5, and how that affects the recent 15% increase of emergency services. There was very compelling testimony given about that topic in Roanoke. (Watkins) Page eight of that table speaks to that recommendation. (Marshall) I thought Mr. Foresman suggested that we need data, but much of this has been based on anecdotal evidence. (Watkins) We will reproduce all of the data produced to us. This can be provided at the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING: (Watkins) Does the end of October give everybody ample time to review the white paper and submit additional recommendations? I am thinking about the week of October 20<sup>th</sup>. Let's hold this meeting in one of the subcommittee rooms where we can sit at a table and look at each other to work. Let's tentatively set it up for the afternoon of the 21<sup>st</sup> at 1:00.

ADJOURN: 3:41 PM